**Memories by Tom Montgomery**

**Guide and Trip Leader, Tom Montgomery Expeditions**

This was indeed a terrible loss. I go way back with Simon, at any rate to the beginnings of Poronui when it was what he called just a Batch. Back then I helped Simon cut a route down to the Mohaka and then fished it for an afternoon with him and a friend of mine, Al Wind, who I believe was Poronui’s first guide.

Later, I shot some photos at Poronui for Forbes/FYI when I worked with the writer Charles Gaines on his heli-fishing story for that magazine (speaking of which, have you had a chance to dive into The Next Valley Over?).

Later still, I saw Simon at an early One Fly and for a while we kept up a lively correspondence by snail mail and fax.  That was followed by a long stretch during which I didn’t hear from him at all, although occasionally I saw his name and guiding skills mentioned in your marketing material.  So it wasn’t until recently that we reconnected as a result of Team New Zealand’s entry into the One Fly - and an invitation to dinner at Local that Jack Dennis arranged with Simon and Team NZ in 2015.

I had enjoyed and admired Simon whenever our paths crossed, so it was good to reconnect.  Looking back over the years, I recall his wit and irrepressible energy (he once said to me, using US vernacular, “As you’ve probably noticed, I’ve got a lot of gas in my tank”…and indeed he did!), his cheery but fierce competitiveness, his bright-eyed intelligence, his entrepreneurial spirit, his love of the outdoors, and as I learned at the 2016 One Fly, his dazzling ability to take command of an unruly audience...and deliver a high-energy sales pitch for New Zealand!  And he loved wine.  How he loved wine!

Decades ago, I remember being almost literally drunk under the dinner table at his coastal batch.  That was in the days of Chardonnay.  More recently, it was of course reds that fueled his boundless evening energy.  But first and foremost, Simon as a fellow who stood out in any crowd as a great leader and captain of men.

What a guy!